

Message Text

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CINCPAC

S E C R E T HONG KONG 10632

EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (P A R A 3)

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, CH
SUBJ: THE DEATH OF MAO: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

REF: HONG KONG 6887

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: MAO'S DEATH COMES AFTER A THREE-
WEEK EFFORT TO PORTRAY SENSE OF LEADERSHIP DIRECTION IN
MEETING CHINA'S PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND LOCAL FACTIONAL
DISTURBANCES, MOST LIKELY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT MAO'S HEALTH
HAD DETERIORATED DRASTICALLY. THE SEPTEMBER 9 ANNOUNCEMENT OF
THE CHAIRMAN'S DEATH WAS NOT UNDULY DELAYED, AND THE
APPARENT ABSENCE OF UNUSUAL SECURITY PRECAUTION SUGGESTS THAT THE
CHINESE HAD ANTICIPATED THE OCCURRENCE (PEKING 1778). THE JOINT
ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAO'S
DEATH UNDERSCORED THE CONTINUATION OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY
AND APPEARED TO PLACE MAO'S STAMP OF APPROVAL ON THE HUA
REGIME. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

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1. AS MAO TSE-TUNG'S HEALTH FAILED HIM AND IT BECAME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT THAT HIS DEATH WAS IMMINENT, PEKING'S LEADERSHIP APPEARS TO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PORTRAY AN IMAGE OF UNITY, SHIFTING THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION FROM THE ANTI-RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN TO PRODUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION THEMES. BEGINNING WITH THE AUGUST 23 PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL, WE HAVE WITNESSED A STEADY DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TREND CULMINATING IN THE MAJOR LEADERSHIP TURNOUT FOR THE TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE HEROES ON SEPTEMBER

1. SINCE MAO'S DISAPPEARANCE FROM PUBLIC VIEW IN EARLY JUNE, IT HAS BEEN THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT HEADED BY HUA KUO-FENG WHICH HAS FUNCTIONED AS CHINA'S LEADERSHIP BODY AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MAO'S DEATH, REFERRING TO HIS "ACTIVE" PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONS UNTIL HIS DEATH, APPEARS TO LEGITIMIZE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES. IN LAST WEEK'S JOINT LEADERSHIP TURNOUT IN PEKING, PREMIER/PARTY FIRST VICE CHAIRMAN HUA KIDJHZXLG APPEARED TO DOMINATE THE PROCEEDINGS, CONVEYING A FEELING THAT HE IS MOVING AHEAD TO DEAL WITH CHINA'S PROBLEMS IN A COMPETENT AND AUTHORITATIVE MANNER. THUS, THE IMPACT OF MAO'S DEATH SEEMS MOST LIKELY TO RESULT IN AN EFFORT TO CONTINUE THE PRESENT LOOSELY STRUCTURED LEADERSHIP, WITH HUA KUO-FENG TAKING THE LEAD.

2. THE MAJOR QUESTION REMAINS TO WHAT EXTENT THIS APPEARANCE OF UNITY CAN BE SUSTAINED AND WHETHER FACTIONAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP ARE LIKELY TO DISRUPT INTERNAL STABILITY. WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT DEEP LEADERSHIP DIVISIONS WILL RE-EMERGE AFTER THE IMMEDIATE POST-MAO PERIOD. NEVERTHELESS, WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THAT ANY POLITICAL FACTION WILL FEEL STRONG ENOUGH TO MOVE PRECIPITOUSLY AGAINST ITS OPPONENTS IMMEDIATELY AFTER MAO'S PASSING. THUS, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY CLEAR INDICATORS OF THE ACTUAL DEGREE OF POLITICAL STABILITY WILL EMERGE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT UNTIL AFTER THE PERIOD OF OFFICIAL MOURNING. THE FUNERAL COMMITTEE NAMELIST, AGAIN DESIGNED TO EMPHASIZE A UNIFIED LEADERSHIP, PRODUCED ALMOST NO SURPRISES. WE EXPECT THE FUNERAL ITSELF WILL BE HANDLED IN MUCH THE SAME FASHION.

3. THERE ARE ALREADY SOME SIGNS IN THE JOINT FUNERAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF HOW THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP IS INTENDING TO PLAY THEIR DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY CARDS. FOR EXAMPLE,
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TENG HSIAO-PING IS CLASSIFIED AMONG THE EXPOUNDERS OF OPPOSITION LINES WHICH HAVE BEEN DEFEATED, AND THE REFERENCES TO THE CONTINUATION OF THE "TWO-LINE STRUGGLE" AND THE CONTINUING EFFORT TO CRITICIZE TENG' POLICIES PUTS A LEGITIMATION ON THE CAMPAIGN WHICH WOULD MAKE ANY FUTURE RETURN BY TENG VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT REPUDIATING THE MAOIST LEGACY. SIMILARLY, THE CHINESE HOSTILITY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION, A BASIC UNDERPINNING OF THEIR FOREIGN POLICY, COMES ACROSS IN THE JOINT

ANNOUNCEMENT'S CLAIM THAT MAO "INITIATED" THE "GREAT STRUGGLE TO CRITICIZE MODERN REVISIONISM WITH THE SOVIET REVISIONIST RENEGADE CLIQUE AT THE CORE." THE CALL TO RESOLUTELY CARRY OUT "THE CAUSE LEFT BEHIND BY CHAIRMAN MAO'S REVOLUTIONARY LINE AND POLICIES IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS" PROVIDES A TENTATIVE SIGNAL THAT THE CHINESE LEADERS ARE NOT LIKELY TO MAKE MUCH CHANGE IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY.

4. AFTER PAYING THE NECESSARY KUDOS TO TAKING CLASS STRUGGLE AS THE KEY LINK AND STRENGTHENING THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, THE OBITUARY COMES DOWN HARD ON THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN CENTRALIZED LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY AND RALLY ROUND THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THIS THEME IS LIKELY TO REMAIN THE KEYSTONE OF PARTY CENTER APPEALS IN THE COMING MONTHS. THE THEME OF NATIONAL UNITY, ALSO MENTIONED IN THE JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT, IS LIKELY TO REMAIN A MAJOR FOCUS AS WELL.

5. AS CHINA EMERGES FROM THE SHOCK OF MAO'S DEATH, WE WILL BE LOOKING FOR INDICATORS OF THE LIKELY COURSE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. THE MEDIA SHOULD PROVIDE SOME OF THE FIRST IMPORTANT CLUES CONCERNING REGIME STABILITY IN THE COMING WEEKS. FOR EXAMPLE, A RESURGENCE OF STRIDENT ARTICLES CALLING FOR CONTINUED EFFORTS TO ROOT OUT CAPITALIST ROADERS IN THE PARTY WOULD BE A CLEAR SIGN THAT FURTHER FACTIONAL PROBLEMS ARE AHEAD. CENTRAL DIRECTIVES, RECENTLY KEYED TO PRODUCTION THEMES, WILL ALSO OFFER A MEASURE OF THE REGIME'S ABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS AND CARRY THEM OUT. FINALLY, WE WILL BE LOOKING FOR FORWARD MOTION ON A NUMBER OF DECISIONS THAT HAVE BEEN IN ABEYANCE DURING THE DEVISIVE ANTI-TENG CAMPAIGN SUCH AS THE CONVENING OF A PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM AND NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS SESSION, COMPLETION OF MASS ORGANIZATION MEETINGS, THE FILLING OF PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND A FIRM STAND ON FACTIONAL PROBLEMS AT THE LOWER LEVELS.

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6. AS WE HAVE SAID EARLIER (REFTEL), THE BEST THAT CHINA CAN HOPE FOR IS A LEADERSHIP CAPABLE OF HOLDING THE COUNTRY TOGETHER AND SUCCESSFULLY GUIDING IT THROUGH THE PERILS OF THE IMMEDIATE POST-MAO PERIOD. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO RULE IN THE TOWERING FASHION OF MAO TSE-TUNG, WITH THE NEXT LEADER OF THE PARTY BEING MORE CONCERNED WITH CO-ORDINATING AND GUIDING THE WORK OF THE PARTY. FROM ALL APPEARANCES, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT HUA KUO-FENG IS LIKELY TO EMERGE AS PRIMUS INTER PARES IN A POLITBURO THAT IS APPARENTLY ATTEMPTING TO PULL TOGETHER AFTER A PROLONGED PERIOD OF INTERNAL CONFLICT.

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